

Interpreting history: thoughts on History Day

This post originally had thoughts on my presentation at the iSchool symposium, which has been incorporated into an upcoming e-book.

I'd like to talk about some thoughts on Maryland History Day, for which I judged this past weekend, including [as a chief judge](#) in the morning for senior individual websites. They included topics ranging from, as I [noted on Twitter](#), the Apollo Missions to the Atomic Bomb. I also did runoffs for documentaries, with topics [including](#) "Cocoanut Grove, Stonewall Riot, Thalidomide tragedy, ACT-UP, the Osage indigenous people (and oil), and the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire," some of which I had not heard of before. As I [awaited](#) the winners, I already knew that the group documentaries I had reviewed had won, documentaries like "Last Dance at the Cocoanut Grove" (by Aidan Goldenberg-Hart, Daniel Greigg, Eli Protas, Joey Huang, and Charles Shi) which got first place, and "From Inefficient to Inspiring: How the Stonewall Riots Changed LGBT Activism" (by Pallavi Battina and Amulya Puttaraju) which got second place. However, when it came to individual websites, one of the ones I reviewed got first place! It was titled "Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington: How Their Investment in People Led from Tragedy to Triumph" and it was by Matthew Palatnik. None of the websites my group had nominated for special prizes won. So that was positive.

History Day made it clear to me that even the topics often written about can be talked about in a new way, with a new interpretation, with these students entering the process of historical research, so I wish them the best in the days going forward. In June, I will serve as a judge on the national level of History Day at College Park, which should be fun!

In closing, there is a strain that connects the visualizations I made this semester and Maryland History Day: the importance of history and interpretations of what happened, allowing for new insights and thoughts, enriching how our collective past is understood.

ADDENDUM

NOTE: the below is reprinted from [my post](#) on Mar. 1, 2019 entitled “I’m part of a wonderful research cohort this semester”:

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Burkely is a student in the MLIS program on the Archives and Digital Curation track, working on the DCIC’s Legacy of Slavery program in conjunction with the Maryland State Archives. He is a graduate of St. Mary’s College of Maryland, where he studied history and political science. He likes to write, research, play board games, hike, and venture into the Twitterverse from time to time. He also is the family historian for both sides of his family, running two genealogy-related blogs: [Packed with Packards!](#) and [Milling ‘round Ireland](#).

Just thought I’d share the most recent news, that I’m working with the DCIC (Digital Curation and Innovation Center) at UMD to “conduct research using computational tools and archival data to illuminate the history of enslaved people in Maryland,” with two other MLIS students (Chrissy Perry and Ben Shaw), and one sophomore in the iSchool (Ali Bhatti). I’ll also be working, with these wonderful people, Ryan Cox of the Maryland State Archives, faculty sponsor Katrina Fenlon, project manager Noah Dibert, and programmer Greg Jansen “to tell the stories of people represented in the data using mapping and digital storytelling tools; to identify connections between the data and related projects on the history of enslavement; and to develop and explore visualizations to support discovery, use, and interpretation of the Archives.” Read more about it on [the DCIC’s website](#). Also see photographs of me, and other fellow students, at the [student showcase](#) last semester in that horrid ugly sweater, lol, with most of the charts on the poster made by yours truly:

